

**GOVERNOR VISITS**

**POLICY**

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| Adopted by Standards & Performance on: |  |
| Ratified by the Governing Body on: |  |
| Review Date | March 2017 |

**Governor visits in Shenfield High School should:**

* contribute towards the development of a deep and accurate understanding of the school’s performance and of staff and pupils’ skills and attributes
* increase the governing body’s knowledge of how the school works to enable it to provide strategic oversight, to act as a ‘critical friend’ and to hold the school to account for its performance
* provide the governing body with an opportunity to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school and to undertake its statutory responsibility to promote high standards at the school
* provide an opportunity to develop an effective partnership between governors and staff
* have a clear focus and be linked to priorities in the School Development Plan and/or any areas for improvement identified by Ofsted if the school has been inspected recently.

The governing body is a corporate body and governors visit the school as a representative of that body, not as an individual.

‘If governing bodies are to monitor and evaluate the school’s work they need to visit the school. When handled well, these visits build up trust and respect between staff and the governing body, and they allow governors to monitor the school’s work in a way that is far more supportive than if they just attend meetings.’

Source: the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)

**Further aims of a visit:**

* To show to staff and pupils that governors are interested in the life, work and achievement of the school.
* To increase governing bodies’ understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
* To enable governors to see things in the context of the school and to support the school’s work.
* To enable governors to see evidence of policies in action.
* To increase governors’ understanding of the teaching and learning process.
* To enable the governing body to ask informed questions in governing body meetings by gaining first-hand knowledge of the working of the school.
* To enable governors to see resources purchased by the budget being used by the school community – particularly the pupils.
* To ‘take the temperature’ of any aspect of the school by speaking to specified staff, pupils and/or parents.

Some visits to school will be less formal than others, such as attendance at school productions, sporting events and enterprise activities.

Other visits will relate to specific responsibilities that governors may have – for example Safeguarding, Special Educational Needs (SEN), Pupil Premium Grant, Finances or Health & Safety.

**Visits**

Formal visits to school by governors will be based on the current key priorities in the School Improvement Plan.

A team of governors, led by a senior governor, will each focus on an agreed development priority. Each Team will undertake a number of visits per year, ensuring that all key priority areas are addressed across the year.

The link Deputy Headteacher to the School Standards and Performance Committee will organise the visits in consultation with the Headteacher, other member of SLT and any further staff involved in the visit.

**Visit Procedure**

**Before we visit school we will:**

* Agree the purpose and focus of the visit with the link Deputy Head Teacher to the School Standards and Performance Committee.
* Ensure there is a clear timetable for the visit, beginning and ending with a short meeting with the Deputy Head Teacher.
* Prepare by familiarising ourselves with any relevant documentation, e.g. policies that we might be interested in seeing ‘in practice’.

**During our visits to school we will:**

* Respect teachers’ professional space, and be aware that the dynamic of a class can alter when a visitor arrives.
* At the start of the visit, agree with the class teacher and/or other member of staff the role most appropriate for us.
* Not make notes (see below); instead be relaxed and interested.

**After our visits to school we will:**

* Thank everybody involved in our visit.
* Feedback to the Deputy Head Teacher and Head Teacher, and ask for clarification on any issues that we have not understood or did not talk with staff about.

**As a follow up to our visits we will:**

1. Complete a visit report [Appendix 2] and send it to the Deputy Head Teacher for any comments/clarification/suggestions, and for retaining in a separate governors’ evidence folder. The report should also be sent to governors in advance of the next School Standards and Performance Committee meeting.
2. Feedback to the full governing body, through the minutes of the School Standards and Performance Committee on what we learned from our visit, enabling everybody to consider the outcome together, and to reflect upon the effectiveness and success of our visits.

[Please see Appendix 1 for further guidance on conducting visits]

**Appendix 1: Governor Visits Policy**

**Some gentle reminders**

Think about the purpose of the visit; about questions we might like to ask.

Report to the school office on arrival and when leaving, and be identifiable as a governor (i.e. wear a badge).

Dress appropriately as professional members of the school body.

Try to speak with the pupils and other members of staff besides the senior leadership team and class teachers, where this is appropriate.

Our visits are not inspections; we should make notes as soon as possible after our visit, and not during. Don’t use a clipboard!

Respect confidentiality; details about individual pupils which you may pick up during a visit are confidential and are not be discussed outside the school community at any time, with anybody.

Keep your governor ‘hat’ on: we should try to adapt to the circumstances, to what’s happening around us, and should capture this in our reports – lots of things can be covered during a visit and which weren’t necessarily part of the agreed focus.

Visits should be an enjoyable experience for everybody – smile!

We must be mindful that the school is a busy, professional learning environment, and that the dynamic of a class can alter upon the appearance of governors (who may not be particularly well known by the pupils and staff).

Our visits to classrooms are notabout making judgements about the quality of teaching and learning in the school. That responsibility is the preserve of the Headteacher and senior staff, as these judgements are a specialist skill that many governors are unlikely to have.

Governors’ visits to school are not just about visiting classrooms. We should familiarise ourselves with other areas in school like the school grounds, the playground and sports facilities; how pupils and parents act and interact coming into and leaving school at each end of the school day. Shared space around the school – the school hall, the learning resource area/library and corridors are also useful places to see. Areas used for school administration should also be visited to get an idea of the working lives of those people the school employs. Governors should also make regular visits to those areas of the school that support disadvantaged students and also vulnerable students, but do so mindful of the reason why the school provides such areas – including C8, The Vocational Centre and the Oasis Centre.

**Appendix 2: Governor Visits Policy**

**Governor Visit Report**

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| **Name of Governor:** | **Date of Visit:** |
| **Priority Area: Practice / Provision / Student Welfare and Support** |
| **Purpose of visit** (Previously agreed with the Deputy Head Teacher) |
| **Summary of activities** (e.g. observing classes, talking to staff and pupils, looking at resources, had lunch etc.) |
| **Link with the School Development Plan**(How does the visit relate to the areas for improvement identified in our School Development Plan?) |
| **Observations and comments by the governor**(e.g. what you saw; what you learned; what you would like clarified; how long the visit lasted) |
| **Any key issues arising for the governing body**(e.g. was the visit focus appropriate; the way resources are allocated/used; progress in implementing a key policy; comments/suggestions made by the pupils and/or the staff during the visit) |
| **Ideas for future visits** |
| **Any other comments** |